



Advancing national support
for climate neutral cities

Annual Activity Plan 2

Deliverable D2.2

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Disclaimer

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This document is the 1st version of the Annual Activity Plan 2 encompassing activities planned for the 2nd year of the project (November 2023 – October 2024). At the time of the submission one core country was still delayed with their Annual Action Plan, therefore, once it is received the necessary updates and/or conclusions will be incorporated.



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Executive Summary

CapaCITIES supports European countries in creating national structures to support the European Cities Mission at the national level. The ongoing activities and respective knowledge of the national actors that are part of the CapaCITIES consortium are at the heart of the project. With this deliverable, all fifteen CapaCITIES Core Countries have updated their Annual Action Plans describing the main achievements of the first year, the challenges that might have set back the process and the objectives and planned actions for the second year of the project to advance the implementation of the mission.

CapaCITIES is there to support, connect, empower and inspire national authorities, national ministries, funding agencies and agencies responsible for urban transitions in their efforts to build up the necessary *national* change processes. To this end, various measures are being taken:

- An alliance to showcase good practices so that they can be shared and learned from on a larger scale.
- Capacity building sessions based on the Core Countries' specific issues addressed at the self-assessment provided by ICLEI's expertise.
- Learning materials to deepen the understanding of the design and process behind national support structures, barriers and levers to implementation, good practices for engaging relevant stakeholders and supporting smaller cities and non-mission cities.
- Webinars and one-on-one workshops with the Core Countries to assist in the set-up of countries' Transition Labs to advance the national change processes.
- Communication efforts such as a website, a Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation Plan (C&D&E), a newsletter, and ambassadors in each country to disseminate and leverage results.



Introduction

Horizon Europe has stepped up its efforts to help 100+12 cities become carbon neutral and smart by 2030. To this end, numerous instruments and levers have been created to support cities in their transition to carbon neutrality. One of the most important activities is the development of Climate City Contracts (CCC) for each of the mission cities with the support of the NetZeroCities (NZC) platform and their respective City Advisors. In addition to this European support, parallel developments are taking place at the national level to implement the Cities Mission and support the cities in their efforts to become carbon neutral.

These efforts range from building networks to facilitate exchange to mobilizing relevant stakeholders to build capacity, expertise, technical and financial resources, and effective intervention portfolios. The past year has shown that the European Cities Mission has generated great momentum and drive in the Member States. Across Europe, nation states are in the process of creating governance structures, mobilizing stakeholders, acquiring budgetary resources to support not only the Mission Cities, but to mobilize other cities in their national context, disseminating knowledge and building the necessary capacity across the country. Some have even begun to justify their activities and platforms as legal entities (e.g. in Greece). According to a recent NZC report¹, these activities are critical to unlock financial resources and remove regulatory barriers to drive the cities' mission and transition to carbon neutrality.

Nevertheless, the EC Communication 'EU Missions two years on: assessment of progress and way forward'² also highlights several shortcomings in the implementation of the Cities Mission. These conclusions have also been reflected in the planning of our activities for the second year of the CapaCITIES project. One significant finding is the relatively low involvement of national governments, emphasizing the need for their increased engagement. As also mentioned in the report, this is exactly where the CapaCITIES project is well positioned to further enhance its performance in the next year given the ongoing cooperation with 15 core countries and the long-term ambition to further expand our collaboration to all European countries. For example, the Transition Labs (WP3) as well as the Learning Portfolio (WP2) aim to bridge the currently existing disparities in governments' engagement levels across countries.

Another concern raised is the challenge of effectively communicating the concepts of 'climate-neutrality' and 'smart' to the public. In the second year of the project we will pay particular attention to our storytelling practices – not only focusing on what we want to communicate, but also on how we can make it more understandable to the target audience and through which communication channel. As a case in point, when we organise capacity-building sessions (WP4) and multi-stakeholder "Transition Labs" (WP3) as well as when it comes to the dissemination of the Learning Portfolio (WP2) we will place a particular importance on finding the right way of conveying the Cities Mission narrative.

Furthermore, the report emphasizes the Mission's role as a unifying force, bringing various

¹ Report on City Needs, Drivers and Barriers towards Climate Neutrality <https://netzerocities.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/D13.1-Report-on-city-needs-drivers-and-barriers-towards-climate-neutrality.pdf>

² COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT EU Missions two years on [https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=SWD\(2023\)260&lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=SWD(2023)260&lang=en)

initiatives together, this is reflected in our alignment efforts to various European initiatives for example through the Acceleration Forum and through closely working together with the NZC City Advisors.

CapaCITIES builds on the national efforts and bridges the gap between the European Cities Mission and ongoing change processes at the national level. CapaCITIES supports the Cities Mission on the national level by

- 1) establishing a transnational alliance and learning environment for national public authorities,
- 2) co-designing and prototyping national change processes, and
- 3) exploiting synergies with the International/European landscape on climate neutral and smart initiatives.

Vision of CapaCITIES

CapaCITIES will shape a European environment conducive to urban climate neutrality transitions for national, regional and local authorities. It will initiate and strengthen national change processes to establish national networks and governance structures and provide dedicated support for public authorities to put enabling conditions and measures for cities in place to achieve the mission.

This ambitious vision is supported by 15 European countries representing national authorities, national ministries, funding agencies and agencies responsible for urban transitions. These constitute the "core countries" of this consortium. In addition, associated partners represent another 6 European countries that constitute the "supporting countries". (See Figure 1)

These partners represent the core work of the consortium, while the consortium's management team (consisting of representatives from UEFISCDI, FFG, AIT, ICLEI, ENEA and Viable Cities) builds the necessary support structures to orchestrate the different levels of governance, connect the countries, and jointly develop urban sustainability management and capacity building processes at multiple levels.

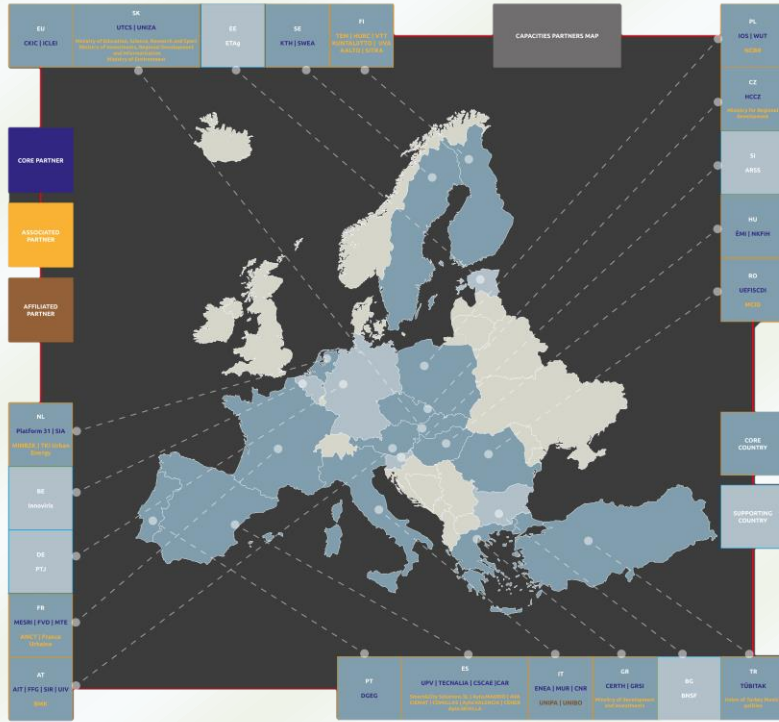


Figure 1: Overview of the CapaCITIES partners

Structure and aims of this deliverable

This deliverable is intended to serve as a guide for next year's work by outlining

- 1) the achievements of the project in the 1st year (management team and core countries)
- 2) the objectives, actions and needs identified by the core countries for the 2nd year, and
- 3) the upcoming activities of CapaCITIES planned within the Work Packages (WP).

The focus of this report and the work of CapaCITIES is based on the activities being done at the national level in the core countries (see Figure 2). Therefore, the management team has collected updates regarding the 1st annual action plans (2023) of each core country to understand the latest developments in the countries, their overall objectives and their needs to be addressed by the CapaCITIES management team. The summary of these country-specific plans is provided in the next section. After this section, the activities identified by the management team are explained. The planned actions aim to reflect the needs of the countries and provide them with a range of formats, tools, and capacity building opportunities to create the necessary national structures to support the cities – while taking into consideration the latest development in the broader Cities Mission context.

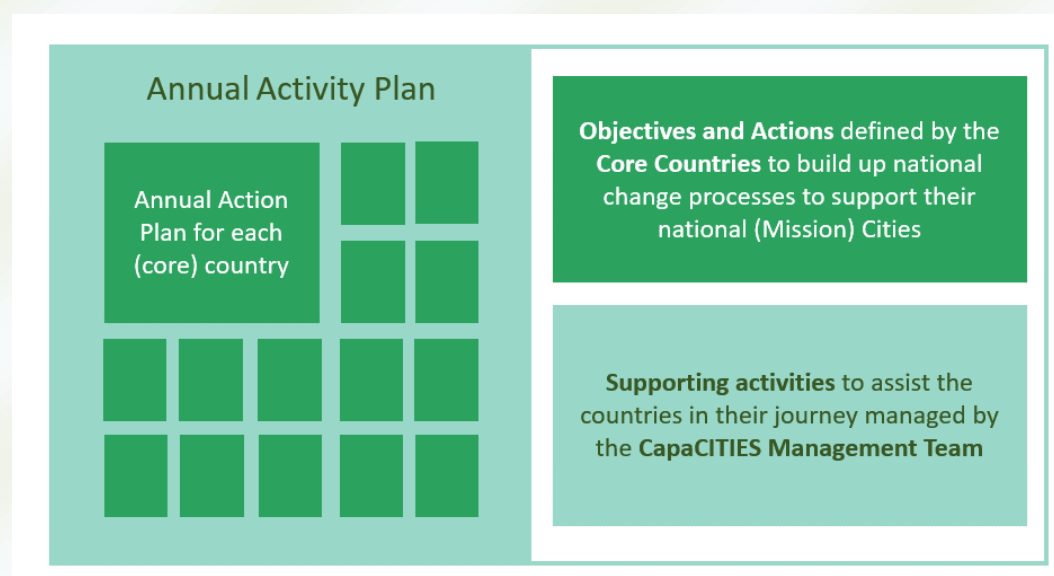


Figure 2: Overview of the Annual Activity Plan

Reflections of the 1st year of the CapaCITIES project

CapaCITIES project objectives and our operational efforts in the first year of the project

Before outlining the activities of each WP for the next year, this list provides a short summary of the already ongoing activities since the project start in October 2022. The activities are grouped within the three general objectives of CapaCITIES.

Establish a transitional alliance for public authorities to strengthen urban transitions towards climate neutrality

- Collaboration and exchange with the Core Countries on a regular basis
- Monthly Jour Fix for the Core Countries to exchange on new activities and experiences – this was requested at the Kick-Off Meeting.

- Development of concept on Transitional Mission Alliance (D2.5) and a planned initial timeline of events for next year (see Figure 3)
- Gather mechanisms and functioning of effective multi-level governance and cross-sector structures of Core Countries
- A series of interviews has taken place in WP2 with 10 out of the 15 core countries (Austria, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, and Türkiye) to deep dive in some of the cases. Based on these interviews the 1st Annual CapaCITIES Learning Portfolio was developed. (D2.3)
- Transnational Alliance events (e.g.: CapaCITIES Participatory Policy Lab in Brussels, organised inside the European Week of Regions and Cities 2023)

Co-design and prototype effective multi-level and cross sector governance structures and demand driven interventions for enabling national change processes

- Support core countries in prototyping, testing and evaluating multilevel governance approaches
- Self-assessment tool was developed and mappings delivered by all the core countries (D4.1 and D4.2)
- Training materials on climate action MRV, modelling and innovation in impact assessment were prepared (D4.4)
- Supporting materials for co-created interactive curriculum were formulated (D4.3)
- Synergies with survey from TRAMI and OECD Mission Action Lab (this lab is only conducted in a few of the 15 CapaCITIES countries, so synergies are only possible where the lab is also involved e.g. Austria)
- Workshop organised in Stockholm on 8 December 2022 to introduce Core Countries to the methodology of the Transition Labs and present other national cases to the Core Countries
- Presentation prepared on first results of the interviews on what kind of national support structures have been prepared by the national countries to support the Cities Mission and beyond, also asking the question on how

Exploiting Synergies with International/European and national climate neutral and smart city initiatives

- Mission Board Members, NZC City Advisors (CA), and CapaCITIES core country meeting
 - First meetings have taken place with Portugal, France, Greece, Romania and Türkiye, leaving the option for the core countries to self-organise for further discussions both with the MB members and the CAs. Contacts were shared via the online project's sharing space (UDrive).
 - Operational support and progress on the cities needs
- Connection with the [NECPlatform](#) was established in 2022 to cooperate with the core countries Romania, Italy, Portugal and one supporting country Bulgaria. This selection has been proposed as these are the overlapping countries between the two consortia.
- TRAMI and [OECD mission action lab](#) (synergies are to be exploited)
- Regular exchanges with the NZC Cities Mission platform have continued and were advanced to monthly thematic meetings (e.g. multi-level governance) to exchange on each other's project experiences, inform each other about upcoming activities

- and align objectives and actions.
- CapaCITIES website as DUT sub-page was built up, additional activity to maximise visibility and logo created. Regular communication through the DUT channels about CapaCITIES activities is taking place (newsletter, LinkedIn), reaching to more than 28 countries.
- The Ambassador Concept was co-developed with the CapaCITIES team, and currently several core countries are discussing and testing the implementation on national level. It was also presented and discussed at the Mission Board meeting in Barcelona on communication and outreach on 9 November 2023.
- C&D&E Plan was co-created and submitted as D5.1, keeping the format of a living document.

Main achievements in the core countries in the first year of CapaCITIES

The 15 CapaCITIES core countries differ in terms of their national context, the challenges they face at the national level to establish the structures and thus their activities to implement the Cities Mission.

The outcomes from the first-year achievements of the CapaCITIES project reveal substantial progress across the participating core countries. Through collaborative efforts all the core countries have successfully connected the selected Mission cities with the national CapaCITIES partners, carried out comprehensive stakeholder mappings, and executed SWOT analyses – all contributing to a holistic understanding of each nation's urban climate challenges and the broader national governance context. Most countries have organized national events (currently either in the planning phase or actual implementation) which showcase the commitment to foster dialogue and collaboration among all the different actors – these events are supported with resources from the CapaCITIES project. Moreover, some countries have demonstrated advanced strides by establishing operational national support structures, indicating a proactive stance towards enhancing urban climate resilience. Notably, in some core countries there is a well-established connection to other European initiatives, particularly with NZC and New European Bauhaus, showcasing synergies and collaborative engagement at a broader European level. Overall, these achievements underscore a dedicated pursuit of the CapaCITIES project's objectives during its inaugural year.

Challenges and key learnings identified by the Core Countries based on the first year of CapaCITIES

In our annual review we have asked the core countries to identify the challenges that might have set back the implementation of the Cities Mission on national level during the first year of the CapaCITIES project. The most common ones are listed below.

Complex Ecosystem and Lack of Alignment: The intricate ecosystem of European and national initiatives has led to confusion, with this lack of alignment posing difficulties. Different partners involved in CapaCITIES project and other initiatives (European programmes and national support structures) contribute to this complexity.

Financing and Funding Constraints: A significant hurdle has been the challenge of securing adequate financing and funding for the implementation of actions supporting climate-neutrality. This underscores the financial complexities inherent in such ambitious projects.

Sensitivity to Political Environment: The implementation has been susceptible to the

influence of changing political environments and interests, adding a layer of unpredictability to the initiative.

Moderate Priority of the Cities Mission: The City Mission's status as a relatively low priority for some ministries has hindered progress. This reflects broader challenges in ensuring awareness of the Cities Mission and high-level commitment to urban climate neutrality.

Nevertheless, these challenges encountered in the initial year of the CapaCITIES project have yielded valuable insights, shaping key learnings essential for future advancements:

Clear Communication of Ambitions: Improved clarity in communicating the ambitions of the Cities Mission is essential. Ensuring that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of the overarching goals is crucial for alignment.

Eagerness to Act: The first-year experience reveals a shared eagerness among many actors to take action, thus we need to build on this in order to secure a collective commitment to the Cities Mission's goals.

Improved Coordination: However, better coordination with different stakeholders is identified as a crucial aspect, emphasizing the need for enhanced collaboration and communication among diverse participants.

Disentangling Complexities: Recognizing the need to disentangle the complex web of ambitions, regulations, and responsibilities is a vital learning, suggesting a streamlined approach to navigate intricate structures.

Focus on Concrete Actions: The emphasis on focusing more on concrete actions that showcase the tangible outcomes of invested efforts is a key learning. Concrete actions can serve as tangible proof of the project's impact both towards the cities and the national governance actors.

Involving Interested Cities: Acknowledging the interest and need to involve not only selected cities but also other interested cities is crucial. This broadens the project's outreach and fosters inclusivity.

These learnings provide a solid foundation for refining strategies, overcoming challenges, and ensuring a more effective and impactful second year for the CapaCITIES project.

[Objectives & Actions planned in CapaCITIES by the Core Countries in 2024](#)

Given the varying current states of play in the core countries, the primary objectives for the second year of the CapaCITIES project are tailored to address the diverse needs and progress levels across nations.

National event and platform implementation: Several core countries aim to implement the national events and concurrently establish national support structures in the 2nd year. This underscores a commitment to fostering dialogue, collaboration, and the creation of dedicated platforms to facilitate the realization of urban climate neutrality goals at the national level.

Platform fine-tuning and advances stakeholder involvement: More advanced countries are focused on refining their platforms and intensifying efforts to engage various stakeholders. This involves a strategic emphasis on storytelling, using narratives to effectively communicate the project's objectives and achievements to a wider audience, thereby also fostering stronger co-creation processes with their citizens.

Knowledge exchange and learning: A shared objective across all countries is to facilitate knowledge exchange and learning. This involves actively learning from the experiences and strategies of other countries within the CapaCITIES consortium, cultivating a collaborative environment for mutual growth.

Organizing trainings: All participating countries are eager to participate in training sessions organized by the CapaCITIES core team. This signifies a proactive approach to capacity building, ensuring that stakeholders are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to contribute effectively to the Cities Mission’s goals.

Disseminating CapaCITIES learnings: A universal goal is the dissemination of learnings from the CapaCITIES project to a wider audience. This involves sharing insights gained, good practices identified, and successful strategies implemented, contributing to a collective pool of knowledge that benefits all interested stakeholder.

These national objectives collectively demonstrate a comprehensive and collaborative approach to advancing the overall aims of the Cities Mission. From national events to fine-tuning platforms, engaging stakeholders through storytelling, promoting knowledge exchange, and organizing training sessions, the CapaCITIES project is planning a wide range of activities ensuring the necessary support for the objectives of the core countries.

What do the Core Countries need from CapaCITIES?

As described in the previous paragraphs, there is a recurring need of the core countries of sharing good practices, learning from each other, and building the necessary capacity. Specific needs vary by topic, but can be summarized into four overarching themes.

1. How to set up and maintain national support structures

As mentioned earlier, the status quo of national support structures in core countries varies in terms of scope, size, and when they were formed. Therefore, it is important to understand how these various platforms are established, what their goals are, what they do, who they involve and how they evolve over time. A recurring issue for core countries is how to set up and maintain these collaborations among various stakeholders and who specifically to involve. In particular, countries are also looking into aligning among different initiatives related to sustainability and urban climate-neutrality.

2. Events to raise awareness and/or act as a catalyzer to establish a national support structure

Since the beginning of the project, several national events were held to bring the various stakeholders to the table and identify the needs for achieving the Cities Mission. A more detailed description of the events in France, Finland and Türkiye is available on our [website](#). Although these and the planned future events differ in terms of topic, goal, scope and coverage, it is important that core countries can exchange good practices and learn from the previous experiences through the CapaCITIES project.

3. Identification of existing tools, information and training materials for cities to become climate neutral

Another action highlighted in the annual action plans is the identification of existing tools, monitoring systems, financing mechanisms, citizen engagement and communication practices for cities aiming to become climate neutral. Thus, the need of the core countries is

to identify and share European good practices among themselves for further presentation and dissemination – the CapaCITIES Learning Portfolio (D2.3) will serve as a key tool facilitating this learning process.

Annual Activity Plan 2 of the CapaCITIES Management Team

What does the CapaCITIES project do to support the above needs and planned national activities?

Figure 3 outlines the summarized activities (workshops, webinars, events and deliverables) that are provided and offered by the Management Team to the Core Countries and beyond. The workshops, webinars and events and the deliverables are structured according to their use and visibility to a broader community.

The activities and the respective tasks will be elaborated on in the Work Package (WP) sections below. It should be emphasized that the efforts in each work package will be planned and implemented in joint actions to develop a comprehensive offer for the core countries.

WP2 and the Transnational Cities Mission Alliance are focusing on a dialogue and a more open workshop approach, where it is the responsibility of the core countries to use this approach to present, promote and exchange some of their ongoing actions. These facilitated workshops are open to anyone interested in learning more about the core countries' efforts, sharing and networking, and following up on relationships that have been built.

These activities are complemented by WP3 and its Transition Labs approach. The focus is on helping countries better understand and implement the Transition Labs approach in one of their countries. Here, Viable Cities (VC) acts as an advisor and facilitator through the process of implementation.

The capacity building sessions under WP4 provide an opportunity for core countries to learn more about the issues that interest them most and that have emerged from the self-assessment.

The actions in WP5 aim to build strong links to other Cities Mission related initiatives and ensure proper dissemination and exploitation of the results created in the CapaCITIES project. Furthermore, through establishing a network of Ambassadors across the core countries we aim to support awareness raising efforts both at European and national level.

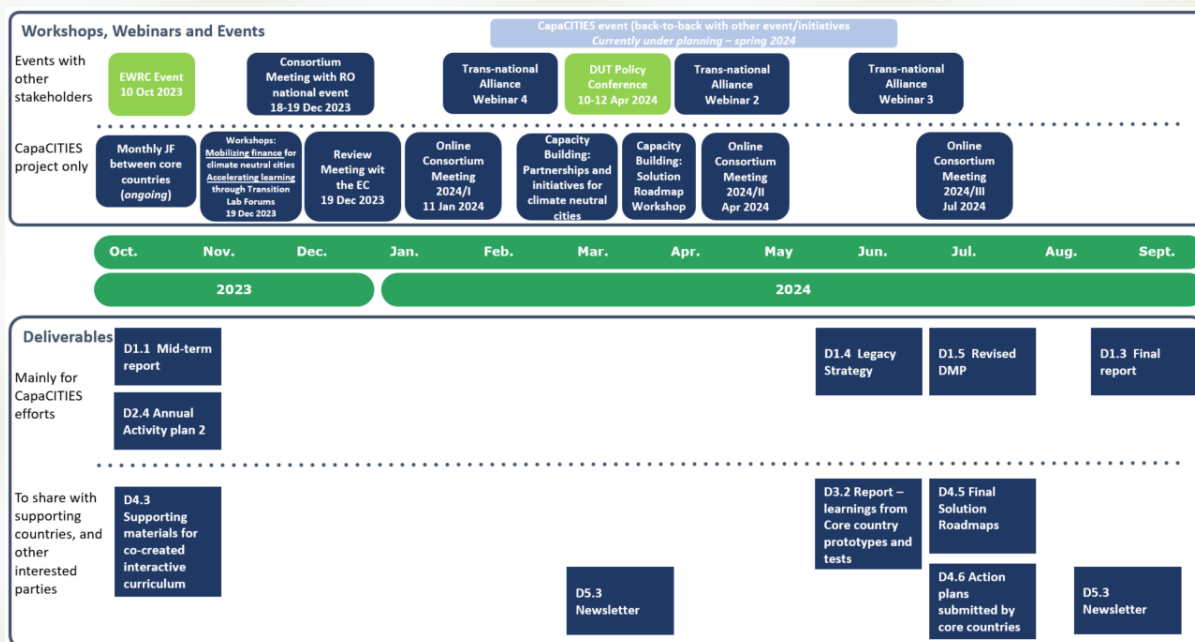


Figure 3: Overview of planned activities of the CapaCITIES project in year 2

Central aims and activities of each Work Package (WP) for 2024

WP1 – Coordination and Management

This WP aims to ensure an efficient and effective implementation of the CapaCITIES work plan by coordinating the consortium and providing an appropriate internal service for the project partners. Furthermore, the coordinator will carry out all project related communication tasks with the EC and act as a contact point for external parties. WP1 will provide effective administration and financial services to the partners and the EC, such as reporting and contractual issues.

Contract management: ongoing process, first reporting period is currently being finalized (November 2023). The Coordinator is available for budget advice or intermediation of the communication with the European Commission, whenever necessary and upon request.

Internal communication: service and facilitation of meetings.

Physical meetings: Next physical consortium meeting will be organized in Cluj-Napoca on 18-19 December 2023.

Online meetings: weekly Core Team meetings are organized with the WP and Task leaders.

Once per three months online consortium meetings are planned with the Core Countries. The first one in 2024 will take place on 11 January.

The Coordinator is providing Zoom platform for online meetings.

The Coordinator is also providing an online sharing space available at <https://udrive.uefiscdi.ro> (UDrive) where all the meetings are documented with notes, minutes and recordings for the consortium meetings). Consortium members get credentials-based access, allowing the identification of the individuals accessing the project materials.

Alignment with the DUT Partnership and other synergies: In the 4th DUT Governing Board Meeting (12-13 June 2023) the CapaCITIES project organized a dedicated workshop to collect

information on what is happening at national level regarding the implementation of the Mission Cities and to gather the expression of interest regarding the participation in the future Transnational Mission Alliance activities. The CapaCITIES project is also planning to contribute to the 2nd DUT Policy Conference (Brussels, 10-12 April 2024) through participating in a session.

CapaCITIES co-leaders, UEFISCDI and FFG, have organized bilateral meetings with different stakeholders at European level (e.g.: NeutralPath project, ERRIN, Covenant of Mayors) to discuss potential synergies between the actions that each initiative is conducting for the Member States. The participants have agreed to keep each other informed on the working plan for 2023 and 2024 to explore participation in each other's public events.

The CapaCITIES project is represented in TRAMI Sounding Board and is participating upon invitation to the Mission Cities Board meetings (subgroup working on governance). Furthermore, CapaCITIES is participating upon invitation in other thematic working group meetings involving the Member States and the European Commission.

WP2 – Transnational Mission Alliance and Exchange Platform

This Work Package aims to

- 1) Moderate the co-design of the change processes with the core countries,
- 2) Synthesise translate and make available knowledge, good practice cases and guidelines for all interested actors, and
- 3) Establish an Alliance where national, regional and local public authorities can engage, exchange and learn from each other.

Under this first objective (see Task 2.1), a review of the core countries' annual action plans was carried out and summarized in this document. These updates reflect the achievements, challenges and learnings from the first year of the project implementation in the national context and also give an overview of the planned activities for next year. This collection serves as the strategic overview of the project and identifies the needs of the countries when it comes to planning the next activities on a CapaCITIES project level. In addition, following the written inputs received from the countries, an online workshop (16 November 2023) was held with the management team to identify key messages from the core countries and further define the project's next activities and provided services for the countries.

One activity initiated by the core countries was to provide a monthly jour fix where they can update each other and discuss the next activities with the CapaCITIES core team. In addition, the country JF will continue to be facilitated by, and the received inputs will be discussed with the Management Team to further strengthen the CapaCITIES activities. Based on the experience of the 1st year, it has become clear that these informal meetings can also be designated for the exchange of specific sets of topics that the countries themselves can choose.

In January 2024 a 2nd meeting with the NZC City Advisors (CA) is planned to share updates with each other regarding the two initiatives and to discuss how we can build stronger collaborations between CAs and the CapaCITIES partners.

In order to further collect and synthesise the lessons learnt from CapaCITIES, the **learning portfolio of the CapaCITIES project (Task 2.2)** will be continuously updated in year 2. The

work on the learning portfolio will consist of three parts:

- 1) Collect feedback from core countries and associated stakeholders on how to improve and further detail out the content of the learning portfolio (consultation during the CapaCITIES consortium meeting in December 2023, exchange and discussion with partnering projects and initiatives such as NZC and the DUT Partnership, dissemination of a “call to action”-postcard for further input on the portfolio as relevant events, discussion with the EC during the review meeting, etc.)
- 2) Complement the series of interviews with the remaining core countries and selected associated countries, specifically focusing on deep-dives and how to make best use of good practice examples
- 3) Further include together with the CapaCITIES partners and WPs - existing guidelines, tools, good practice examples and other useful learnings along the identified “learning topics” as well as deep dive examples and additional learning formats to support the national level in the implementation of the Cities’ Mission

An updated version of the CapaCITIES learning portfolio will be shared on the project website frequently as well as disseminated throughout the planned CapaCITIES events and other occasions (see communication and dissemination). The final version of the learning portfolio will be presented at the final event.

The **Transnational Cities Mission Alliance (Task 2.3)** concept was finalised in the beginning of 2023. The concept (see D2.5) foresees the description of the planned webinars’ programme, including scope, functions and detailed format for each webinar. Hence the concept will also be updated regularly to provide guidance throughout the duration of the project.

The scope of the interactive webinars is to provide a platform for interaction, alliance and cooperation among national public authorities and policymakers to develop skills and share expertise on:

- (1) good practices on national governance structures,
- (2) capacity building measures,
- (3) transition labs,
- (4) methodologies and instruments e.g. climate city contracts, national innovation programmes,
- (5) action plans.

The target groups are relevant national, regional and local public authorities in core and supporting countries that have the mandate to improve enabling conditions for climate neutrality in cities within their given competencies. The next three online webinars in 2024 are planned for February, April and June. Each webinar will comprise three functions:

- (1) Capacity building: Learning from good practice cases, expertise and skills on national level
- (2) Dialogue: Exchange of experiences, knowledge and learnings
- (3) Alliance: Deepened conversation on central climate neutrality aspects

Using synergies and aligning activities among the tasks of WP2, WP3 and WP4 are of high

priority.

WP3 – Multi Level Stakeholder Governance

This Work Package aims to

- 1) identify, develop and prototype multi-level stakeholder governance approaches in all countries,
- 2) set up transition labs,
- 3) support the cooperation and alignment of the mission implementation approaches across European and national levels.

Task 3.1 Mapping of governance actors and core elements in core countries

This task was finalised in the first year of the CapaCITIES project. The Final Report (D1.3) will summarise the mapping of multi-level governance approaches in Core Countries to support the EU Cities mission governance.

Task 3.2 Support Core Country development and learning with Transition Labs

Within this task core countries will be supported to advance and strengthen their governance structures towards mission implementation. This process will focus on involving new actors and overcoming silos depending on country-specific needs and starting points. The approach will be guided and co-designed by VC, and adapted to different national contexts, with national nodes in each country.

During the first year of CapaCITIES, all countries have started the process of initiating or further developing their national platforms. Several countries have also organised national multi-stakeholder “Transition Labs” with multi-level stakeholders from many sectors. This second phase will therefore focus on continuing supporting all countries, particularly through gathering good practices based on the information provided in the national Annual Action Plans, the Self-Assessment, interviews and workshops channelled through the Learning Portfolio (T2.2) and webinars (T2.3).

Task 3.3 Synthesize, showcase and support the replication of multilevel governance approaches

This task will initiate a process to identify, analyse and synthesize innovative governance instruments and multi-level governance approaches across core countries, provide support for replicating prototypes of such approaches and a process for facilitating exchange about them, as part of the Transition Lab approach in Task 3.2. Here we will look into making these activities cross-cutting also with activities in other WPs. Some countries have already started to prototype and test new instruments (e.g. National Climate City Contract in Sweden, Fit4Urban Mission Programme in Austria, Zero-energy neighbourhood programme in the Netherlands), while other countries are just starting.

VC will work with Core Countries who will showcase their innovative governance instruments in small peer groups for in-depth discussion and exchange with the analytical support by VC leading to more detailed insights on the replication potential of innovative multi-level-governance instruments/approaches. The results of the synthesis, the experiences with prototyping support as well as the in-depth peer-to-peer exchanges will be shared with all core and supporting countries for the benefit of all in D3.2 and in the city mission alliance in

T2.3. This task builds on task 3.2, meaning that national arenas, to some extent, need to exist throughout the Core Countries in order to fully start the implementation. As the Core Countries all have different national and regional institutions and structures and therefore different approaches to setting up national platforms, so must the support provided from the CapaCITIES consortium be adapted to the different needs of the individual Core Countries. VC will continue to collaborate closely with other partners within the consortium to deliver tailored support to Core Countries, for example joint webinars and activities. Furthermore, VC will continue to offer individual dialogues on the Swedish approach to national platforms, initiate contact between Core Countries and relevant actors and provide hands on support to Core Countries carrying out national activities and building their national platforms. One example being the national conference that Poland will be hosting 6-7 December 2023.

Task 3.4 Towards synergies between national and EU approaches on multi-level governance structures

VC and ERRIN have jointly established an informal working group between relevant WPs in NZC and the CapaCITIES consortium. The plan is to intensify knowledge exchange and design joint activities during the coming year, as more emphasis is put on multilevel governance in NZC and the importance of regional and national platforms is stressed. The involvement of NZC City Advisors will be an important factor in enhancing collaboration and dialogue between national platforms and Mission Cities.

Furthermore, VC has proposed exploring opportunities for the CapaCITIES project to organize an event in spring 2024 aligned with another conference or initiative focusing on the implementation of the Cities Mission, strategically aiming for synergy and a more substantial impact. The idea is to gather initiatives and projects focusing on multilevel governance within the Cities Mission and beyond, between the CapaCITIES consortium and NZC, the DUT Partnership and New European Bauhaus, etc.

WP4 – Multi Level Capacity and Climate Action

Work Package 4 essentially aims to help core countries create their **Solution Roadmaps**, in which they will specify how the national and regional levels in each core country are going to support cities in reaching their 2030 climate neutrality goal. To this end, WP4 will assist core countries in the **self-assessment** of the current state of affairs in their national contexts (Task 4.1), offer **capacity-building training** (Task 4.2) with the emphasis on the **impact measurement and climate reporting** (Task 4.3), as well as run **hands-on workshops** on how to create Solution Roadmaps (Task 4.4).

Task 4.1 Identifying collective climate neutrality implementation capacity of core country multi-level stakeholder ecosystems

To date, WP4 provided core countries with a template for self-assessment (D4.1) in mid-January 2023, collected input from all core countries and reviewed them by March 2023, and drew conclusions for future work in the CapaCITIES project (D4.2). The self-assessments are envisioned as living documents that core countries can systematically contribute to as they progress with building their national platforms for climate neutral cities. The next ‘submission window’, during which core countries can review their self-assessments and include relevant updates has taken place in October/November 2023. Based on the results of the updated self-assessments, WP4 will review the alignment between proposed programme of activities and core country needs and correct trajectory if necessary.

Task 4.2 Unlocking, developing and streamlining thematic capacities

WP4 is offering capacity-building training that is comprised of 4 online sessions in English. To date, three sessions have been delivered between March and September 2023. Based on discussions as well as the Action Plans and self-assessments submitted by the core country partners, WP4 proposed to cover the following topics. These might be changed or adjusted to the needs expressed by core countries in their updated self-assessments.

- **Deep dive into Climate City Contract: How can the national level engage in developing CCC together with Mission Cities?** (Following up on the meeting with the NZC City Advisors, this capacity-building session shed light on Action and Investment Plans as crucial parts of the CCC and showed opportunities for the national level to get involved in the CCC process.) [29 March 2023]
- **GHG emissions data monitoring and reporting for climate neutral cities: How can the national level actors get more involved?**(During this session, we showcased best practices on climate reporting from selected countries and presented reporting platforms, like *CDP-ICLEI Track*) [12 June 2023]
- **Funding and financing for climate neutral cities: How can the national level support the cities?** (During this session, we introduced partners to the basics of climate investment planning at the local level as well as presented good practices of the national level support for climate neutral cities from Finland and Sweden) [25 September 2023]
- **Partnerships and initiatives for climate neutral cities: How can the EU and national governments support cities?** New models of partnerships are necessary to implement the very ambitious EU Cities Mission. NZC is putting together a mapping of existing partnerships, both and the EU and at the city level. This resource will play a relevant role in disseminating and replicating successful partnership models and ideating new ones, tailored to specific local needs. Better alignment of the EU level partnerships and initiatives will help cities navigate this complex landscape and maximize support) [Spring 2024]

Task 4.3 Capacity development for quantitative impact measurement and reporting for climate neutral cities

In addition to the second capacity-building session on MRV, WP4 provided training materials on climate action MRV, modelling and innovation in impact assessment. It included links to such resources as:

- Key guidelines and frameworks for GHG emissions accounting and monitoring by cities
- Key climate reporting frameworks and platforms for cities
- Key modelling tools
- Concrete examples

Task 4.4 Ideation and co-design of multi-level solution roadmaps

WP4 is also organising hands-on online workshops, in which consortium partners help core countries create their Solution Roadmaps (D4.5). The workshops are dedicated to exploring how national / regional levels from across the core countries can support climate neutral cities

in such thematic areas as: stakeholder mapping and engagement, climate action monitoring and learning, funding and financing, and building partnerships. To date, two workshops were delivered between June and October 2023 and two more are planned for December 2023 and spring 2024.

- **Stakeholder mapping and engagement** (This online workshop provided an opportunity for the core countries to work collectively on their sense-making map, which is a visual tool informing about the structure of the national platforms and how these are embedded in a wider EU landscape. Participants were also introduced to the selected NZC resources relevant for the activities around stakeholder engagement as well as to good practice examples from Finland on engagement with private sector) [1 June 2023]
- **Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning in the Cities Mission: How can the national level better support cities?** (At the workshop, we looked at an integrated indicator and learning framework developed in NZC and brainstormed how the national level could better support climate action monitoring and evaluation in cities) [25 October 2023]
- **Funding and financing for climate neutral cities: Deep dive into city-level Investment Plans** (This workshop is planned to be held in person at the CapaCITIES consortium meeting in Cluj-Napoca. We will invite finance experts from NZC to present first results from the cities' Investment Plans as well as to explain their ongoing and future activities related to finance, like the Mission City Capital Hub) [19 December 2023]
- **Solution Roadmaps** (This workshop will be dedicated specifically to the development of core countries' Solution Roadmaps) [Spring 2024]

WP5 - Measure and synergies to maximize impact

This work package has three objectives:

- 1) synergy with other city mission initiatives,
- 2) communication and dissemination of project results, and
- 3) building a network of ambassadors who will support the efforts of the core countries.

Under **Task 5.1 Co-design and implementation of the Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation Plan** many activities were launched in the 1st year, such as the preparation of the project's logo, corporate identity (closely related to Task 5.5) and website. In addition to this, the Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation Plan (CDEP) was developed (D5.1). The objective of this plan is to provide the CapaCITIES partners with guidelines on the different communication and dissemination activities that are planned and their schedule, who are the partners responsible for each activity, what tools and channels are available for communication and dissemination and what are the actions planned to achieve the exploitation of the results and impact of the project.

In addition, several activities were carried out to prepare the ground for the establishment of a network of national ambassadors, as envisaged in **Task 5.3 (Connect Cities Mission Ambassadors to maximize impact ensure long-term implementation and legacy)**. After several rounds of discussion among the Consortium partners, the finalized Ambassador concept (D5.2) was shared with the core countries and presented during a bilateral meeting

with the Mission Board sub-group on communication and outreach (3 February 2023). The core countries were then provided with all the supporting materials (concept notes, matchmaking matrix, invitation letter, etc.) needed to start identifying the appropriate persons to start their work in a synergetic manner within a national team and maximize the reach of the core countries' actions within the CapaCITIES project. The concept was also presented at the Mission Board meeting at Smart City Expo World Congress in Barcelona in November 2023.

In addition to the Ambassadors, other outreach activities encompass the **Acceleration Forum**. This is closely linked to the DUT Synergies Forum (SF) to leverage the large network and reach. During the 1st informal meeting of the DUT SF in June 2023 one of the identified potential joint actions was how to formalise the cooperation between the DUT Partnership and the Mission Platform – including strong links to the CapaCITIES project. At the official kick-off meeting of the DUT SF on 5 December 2023 it is planned to discuss how these initiatives align, to identify areas of mutual interest, and to facilitate stronger collaboration.

Synergies with the European Cities Mission and funded projects under this umbrella (NZC, TRAMI, Urban Transition Mission Centre) and other connected projects and initiatives (NECPlatform, Covenant of Mayors – Europe Office, European Urban Knowledge Network) are in place due to the close connection of the consortium to all these initiatives (see **Task 5.4 Strengthen synergies with European knowledge and innovation community in the NZC Project** and Task 1.5). In addition, there is a regular monthly 'jour fixe' between NZC and the CapaCITIES project to coordinate activities and find appropriate joint actions. As concrete examples of coordinated actions, the Hungarian CapaCITIES partners gave a presentation at the NZC Winter School on 22 November in Budapest. Furthermore, NZC has recently contacted the Czech CapaCITIES partners to explore how NZC can support stronger partnerships and collaboration between Liberec (Mission City) and other Czech non-Mission cities. We organised a first online meeting on 14 November 2023 to explore links and synergies with the efforts undertaken in the Czech Republic as part of the CapaCITIES project.

In order to create synergies, initial joint meetings have taken place between the core countries, NZC City Advisors, the European Commission and the Mission Committee member for each country, initiated and facilitated by the CapaCITIES Coordinator (see WP1 for more information). The respective national contacts were exchanged, leaving it up to the countries to decide how they want to collaborate and move forward.

Conclusions & next steps

This deliverable and the above mentioned activities define the main ambitions of the CapaCITIES project foreseen until October 2024 – which is also the original ending date of the project. In order to ensure the legacy of the achieved results of the project, there has been ongoing discussions with the DUT Partnership on one hand, and the European Commission on the other hand. Therefore, beyond delivering on the planned activities there will be a substantial emphasis on planning the possible continuation of our activities and assessing how the established transnational networks and exchanges could be maintained and further developed in the future.

References

Cities Mission Implementation Plan

https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-09/cities_mission_implementation_plan.pdf

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Mapping of national and regional city collaboration and support for Cities Mission implementation (NZA report, D5.9)

<https://netzerocities.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/D5.9-Mapping-of-national-and-regional-city-collaboration.pdf>

Report on City Needs, Drivers and Barriers towards Climate Neutrality (NZA report, D13.1)

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